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The decision by the **United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (CIRF)** to blacklist Nigeria as one of the world's worst abusers of religious freedom is not exactly justifiable; it is based on an erroneous understanding of the country's religious circumstances. We are not surprised that the blacklisting was arrived at after some controversy, following reported objections by one or two members of the commission. Certainly, it is not a recommendation that should be endorsed by the United States Congress.

Nigeria's blacklisting on the grounds of religious freedom, is indicated in the current annual report of the CIRF published this month. **The commission** asserted in the report that "the tolerance by Nigeria's federal, state and local governments of systematic, ongoing and egregious violations of religious freedom has created a climate of impunity, resulting in thousands of deaths."

The statement gives the impression that Nigerian authorities tacitly or otherwise support violations of individuals' religious freedom. There may have been reported cases of religious violence and discrimination on the grounds of religion, as in the states which have adopted the Sharia as a criminal orthodoxy, but in many parts of the country, persons of different religious faiths continue to live together in harmony. The situation, with regard to religious freedom, is not so bad as to warrant the imposition of sanctions on Nigeria by the U.S. Congress. Besides, it is worth noting that Nigeria remains a sovereign state with inalienable rights under international law.